

Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113447
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338173
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Keenan
Headteacher	Paul Mulligan
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2007
School address	Abbey Road Pilton Barnstaple EX31 1JU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They also met a few parents informally at the start and end of the day.

Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documents including the school's records of pupils' progress and its monitoring activities, school policies and notes of procedures, teachers' plans and 74 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment of pupils on entry to the school and the consistency of progress by pupils throughout the school
- the level of challenge for the more able pupils and their overall achievement
- the balance between good and outstanding elements in pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive
- the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation in accurately assessing performance and using information gained to raise standards and improve provision.

Information about the school

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Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has many good features and a few outstanding ones, but also several areas that need to improve. The school is outstanding in the way it ensures high quality care, guidance and support for all pupils. It is quite exceptional in the quality of support it provides for those with complex problems. Parents replying to the relevant question in the inspectors' questionnaire unanimously agreed that the school keeps their children safe and pupils made it clear to inspectors that they feel very comfortable and secure throughout their time in the school and appreciate the caring support from all the adults. The school provides an extensive range of stimulating experiences, with many visits, visitors and special events. These contribute to a good curriculum and inspire and motivate the pupils well. They also help promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well, smile a lot and clearly enjoy school. However, although pupils enjoy their lessons, the progress made during their time in school is satisfactory rather than good and standards are average. The rate of progress is not consistent in parallel classes or from year to year. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the effective and extensive additional support received and make good progress. However, the school has recognised there is less specific provision for the more able pupils. Relatively few of these pupils make good progress and too few exceed national expectations for their age.

There is much good and occasionally some outstanding teaching, with pupils enthralled and totally engaged in learning. But a significant minority remains satisfactory and there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching. In too many lessons, teachers do not match work and activities sufficiently to the full range of pupils' abilities, with the more able pupils, in particular, insufficiently challenged. The school is aware of this variation in quality and the need for teaching to improve further. They have had some success, for example in the improved use of computers to support teaching and learning, a previous weakness which now is often good. The school has improved in a number of other specific areas since the last inspection, including innovative developments in the curriculum. It has satisfactory capacity to improve further. The headteacher, other leaders and the governors are committed to making improvements across the school but have found it difficult to raise standards and secure consistently good or better teaching. There are comprehensive systems for checking the school's performance involving the headteacher and other leaders. Most, but not all, of the findings are accurate, and are used to bring about improvements. However, a few judgements are over-generous, including those for teaching, pupils' progress and the school's overall effectiveness, and this tends to reduce the sense of urgency for further improvement. The school has detailed systems for assessing and tracking the progress of all pupils, but targets set for

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the end of Year 6 do not make the best use of recent information, are not always realistic and so not as effective in helping to raise standards as they should be.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the quality of teaching is good or better in all classrooms by establishing consistent practice that: - matches work and activities closely to the full range of abilities, including those who are more able - provides clear and helpful feedback about next steps and how to improve - offers a stimulating classroom environment with prompts and displays to support learning - makes the best use of time and ensures a good pace throughout lessons.
- Increase by at least ten percentage points the proportion of pupils exceeding nationally expected standards in English and mathematics in all four year groups by the summer of 2011.
- Improve the effectiveness of self-evaluation by ensuring: - judgements are always rigorous and findings presented accurately and in relation to national expectations - the most recent performance data are considered when setting targets for pupils' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enter Year 3 with broadly average attainment. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average, being a little higher in English and science than mathematics, and overall achievement is satisfactory. Too few of the more able pupils attain above average standards in the core subjects by the end of Year 6. Standards in the creative arts are above national expectations. Although progress varies from class to class, it tends to accelerate towards the top of the school after a relatively slow start. Pupils enjoy their learning, as seen in lessons and reported by almost all parents in the questionnaire. In many lessons, they work enthusiastically, responding well when challenged. In a few lessons, where the pace slows or expectations are too low, a few pupils become fidgety or distracted. The school has worked effectively to minimise previous variations in rates of progress between boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and benefit from carefully planned activities, often led by skilled teaching assistants in very small groups.

Behaviour is good in most lessons and often exemplary around the school, for example in assembly or when picnicking on the playground in small informal groups at lunchtime. The content of their packed lunches is reasonably healthy and in other ways pupils show a commitment to healthy lifestyles including diet and physical exercise. They speak enthusiastically about the sport sessions on Friday afternoons. Pupils conscientiously carry out responsibilities, for example as school councillors and play leaders or by setting up assembly. They contribute to the local community well including being buddies in the nearby special school, performing locally in the choir, or raising funds for a local charity. Pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills needed for the next stage of education and adult life are average and they confidently turn to computers to help

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them in their studies. Attendance is marginally below average with a higher proportion than usual taking family holidays during term time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school takes exceptional care of pupils. Very good induction and transition procedures enable pupils to settle quickly on arrival and in their preparation for secondary school. This is appreciated by parents with comments such as, 'She has settled in so quickly,' and 'the meeting for new parents was excellent.' There are very effective systems, including the recently introduced '360 reviews' to involve parents, pupils and staff jointly when considering support and next steps for all pupils. The headteacher provides a clear lead in ensuring the inclusion of all pupils. The school is particularly effective in its care, guidance and support of potentially vulnerable pupils, deploying trained staff and being proactive in work with external agencies. It has worked strenuously and sensitively to improve the attendance of persistent absentees. The variation in the quality of teaching and use of assessment is often too great. Teachers work effectively to make learning enjoyable in many lessons, for example, in a

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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mathematics lesson, pupils circulated with unknown numbers on their back asking mathematical questions, such as 'is it divisible by 6?' In a topic lesson pupils speculated about the contents of a rucksack packed ready for a trip to India. In many lessons, teachers ensure work is matched to the range of pupils' needs and inspectors observed some excellent attitudes by pupils when inspired and/or challenged. In other lessons, this is not the case, and here, too often, the pace slows and more able pupils are not extended or motivated. Teachers make good links between subjects, strengthening the curriculum. They are developing a range of ways to assess pupils' learning and involve pupils in self-assessment. The school's guidance about marking work is applied inconsistently with great contrasts between the frequency and quality of feedback about next steps in learning and how to improve. In around half the classrooms, there are too few displays designed to help the pupils with their learning and in a few lessons timetabling and organisational issues mean time is not used to best advantage.

The rich and varied curriculum is strengthened by the excellent range of special events and activities such as the 'forest school' initiative, strong international links and residential visits in each year group. The school has the 'Artsmark Gold' award in recognition of its excellent work in the creative arts. 'Big event' planning skilfully links subjects. Global education links, for example the extended visit by an Indian dancer, strongly supports the pupils' good awareness of global diversity. Planning to promote an awareness of Britain's cultural diversity beyond north Devon is less strong. There are effective and systematic ways in which the curriculum is adapted for the less able and the school has recognised the need for more systematic approaches to fully meet the needs of the more able.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are very successful in promoting an inclusive atmosphere in which all pupils are valued and enabled to flourish. Much energy is given to this, resulting in the pupils' strong personal development and the excellent care, guidance and support. The school tackles equality well and does not tolerate discrimination. The leadership has been less successful in its focus on raising achievement. Although short-term learning targets are set and often used well across the school, the setting of long-term targets for pupils and whole groups, designed to raise standards, is too rigidly based on historic information about pupils' performance. Consequently, targets are sometimes unrealistic

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and not always used fully to improve achievement.

The school has carefully structured improvement plans developed from the findings of a range of checks and balances, and these ensure the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. These checks accurately identify the school's relative strengths and weaknesses and thus the priorities for improvement, but many of the overall judgements are too generous. They do not sufficiently consider the link to pupils' achievement or rigorously compare performance with national expectations.

Governors fulfil their roles well. They ensure all the required policies are in place and monitored, including those designed to safeguard pupils. The headteacher and staff implement these safeguarding procedures in an exemplary manner. Frequent meetings by the governors and visits to the school keep them well informed about the school's performance. They have strengthened the way they hold the school to account and recently have been proactive in helping raise expectations about the quality of provision, especially teaching. The school works effectively to promote community cohesion having carefully evaluated its role and the community's needs and attributes. There are frequent experiences and opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand understanding and awareness of those less fortunate than themselves or who have different beliefs or customs. The school has sought to gather parents' views about its work and is aware that a proportion of parents feel communication systems could be better. Inspectors find the school has responded well to these and, for example, the additional report card and '360' parents meeting help provide good opportunities for parents to be informed about their children's progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Views of parents and carers

A very large majority replying to the inspectors' survey indicated positive feelings about almost all aspects of the school's work. In particular, none disagreed about the school keeping their children safe. Almost all say that their children enjoy school and that overall they are happy with the school. Inspectors agree with these points. The areas of least confidence identified by small minorities concerned the amount of information received about their children's progress and future school activities and the rate of progress itself. Inspectors agree that not all pupils are making as much progress as possible, but they found the school has effective ways for involving and informing parents in regular discussions about their children's progress. While they like the many special activities, several parents expressed concerns about the short notice and high costs involved. The school is keeping this last issue under review.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pilton Bluecoat Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 256 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	51	33	45	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	55	31	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	19	42	57	10	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	27	40	54	3	4	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	30	42	37	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	24	42	57	7	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	42	37	50	3	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	35	39	53	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	34	40	54	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	27	41	55	6	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	26	41	55	7	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	30	41	35	47	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	47	34	46	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 September 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School, Barnstaple EX31 1JU

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing some of your work, spending time in lessons and walking round the school. You were very helpful in answering our questions. We are pleased you like your school. Your school is a satisfactory school but it has lots of things that are good and make it special. Here are some of the highlights we noticed.

- Almost all of you enjoy school. We could see this from the many smiles during lessons and especially when moving around the school. Almost all of you who completed our questionnaire said you enjoy school.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school and confident that if you had a problem the adults would help you. All your parents agree. All the adults in school, led by the headteacher, make sure you are looked after very well indeed. The adults try exceptionally hard to help those of you who have problems from time to time.
- You behave well in nearly all lessons and exceptionally sensibly around the school, for example when picnicking on the playground at lunchtime or moving to and from church. Lots of you take on jobs to help out around school.
- You make progress in lessons and try that extra bit when your teachers give you interesting challenges that make you think hard.
- Your teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to do and you are very lucky to have so many special events, visits and visitors, like the forest school, extra sports sessions, trips to London and the arrival of the Indian dancer.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things to make the school even better.

- Make the quality of teaching even better by ensuring the work set is not too hard or too easy for you, you all get good feedback about how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve, and teachers make all your classrooms interesting and helpful places in which to learn. You could help with this by putting up and maintaining some of the displays.
- Help those of you who sometimes find your work a bit easy to make even more progress and produce work of an even higher standard.

- Make sure the leaders use all the information they can find when deciding how well the school is doing, how much needs to improve and what targets they should be setting.

We are sure you will have your own ideas about ways to improve the school and will want to talk to your school councillors and teachers about these.

Yours faithfully

Martin Kerly, Lead Inspector

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